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JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS QUESTIONS

A radio talk by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, broadcast Thursday, December 22, 1938, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home program, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 93 associate radio stations.

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

KADDERLY:

And here's Ruth Van Deman. She's going to answer some of the day-before-the-day-before-Christmas questions that ~~homemakers are asking~~ the Bureau of Home Economics. I suspect, Ruth, those questions are many and varied.

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

Many and varied, I should say, Wallace, I just got off the telephone in time to come up here for this broadcast. A young Washington homemaker is going to cook her first Christmas turkey. She wanted to know what we thought of the plan of stuffing it the day before, and roasting it half done, then finishing the cooking on Christmas.

KADDERLY:

What do you think of it? Wouldn't it help to get dinner on the table sooner?

VAN DEMAN:

I'm not so sure. Stuffing the bird the day before would help to get it in the oven earlier. But I've got my fingers crossed on that half-way roasting. I tried to impress on this new turkey cook that if she tried either of those things she'd have to take extra care of the bird. Other wise she'd make conditions just right for bacteria to develop and make it spoil.

If a bird's stuffed the day before it's roasted, both the stuffing and the bird need to be very cold. And the bird should be put back into a cold refrigerator just as soon as possible. If the stuffing's warm when it's put into a bird, and the bird's kept for several hours at room temperature, that's exactly what bacteria want to start them growing--warmth, moisture, and plenty of protein for nourishment.

And the same thing's true of a bird partly cooked and taken out of the oven. It should be cooled down just as rapidly as possible and kept in a good cold refrigerator until it's put back into the oven. And when it's put back into the oven a good-sized turkey would certainly take some time to heat up to cooking temperature again. And a lot of the good juice would probably be dried out in the process. I question very much whether the hour or so saved would be worth the loss in flavor and juiciness in the turkey.

Another thing people have been asking us about is roasting goose and duck. Should the oven temperature be the same for goose and duck as for turkey?

As usual, Lucy Alexander has some record on the birds she's roasted, so she can pull figures out and quote times and temperatures. From the ones

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she's roasted, she finds 325 degrees Fahrenheit the best oven temperature for a 10-pound goose. Goose is very fat. It needs a little more heat in the oven than turkey. A young duck is fat also, but being smaller, needs about 350 degrees. The smaller birds can take a higher oven temperature because it doesn't take so long for them to cook through. And they're not so likely to get overcooked on the outside.

I could go right on answering questions about roasting the Christmas bird. There's no end to them.

But we've also been getting a lot of queries about the new kind of uncooked cranberry relish. Some people like it even better than the old-fashioned cooked sauce and jelly. It certainly is very easy to make. And it keeps fresh in a covered jar in the refrigerator for weeks. (By the way, a jar of it makes a very nice last-minute gift from the kitchen to send to a neighbor.) To me cranberries are an all winter fruit, not just something to appear and disappear with the Christmas turkey.

To make this new cranberry relish, you need a pound of the berries as red and as plump as you can find. And one orange, and a cup of sugar or strained honey.

As you pick over and wash the berries, be sure to discard any that are soft and have loose skins. Those betties are bitter, though they don't seem actually spoiled.

Next, wash the orange, cut in quarters, and take out any seeds. Then grind the cranberries and the orange, rind and all, through the food chopper, using the fine knife. Then stir in the sugar or the honey, and add about a quarter of a teaspoon of salt, just a pinch. And there you have a very pretty bright crimson, tart relish to go with any kind of roast bird or meat. So much for uncooked cranberries.

Now when you cook cranberries. If you want to keep the bright color and tartness, don't let cranberry sauce stay on the fire any longer than necessary. If you're making the old-fashioned kind with the skins in, have a sugar sirup boiling when you drop the cranberries in. Two cups of sugar and a half cups of water is a good proportion for the sirup, to go with one pound of berries. (I repeat that.)

After you drop the cranberries into the boiling hot sirup, cook them for about 10 minutes. By that time the skins will begin to pop, and the sauce is done. Pour it into a dampened mold, and put it in a cold place to chill. Cranberries are so acid and so full of pectin that the sauce will be jellied in a few hours.

Wallace, is there time for one more question?

KADDERLY:

All the time you want. Christmas dinner has right of way over everything.

VANDEMAN:

This isn't dinner exactly. It's after dinner mints. What makes the

chocolate streaky---light and dark---when you melt it and dip candies in it?

Sometimes the trouble comes because the dipper isn't using the right kind of chocolate. There's a chocolate made specially for dipping candy. Be sure to get that dipping chocolate. Then it should be melted over luke-warm water, never boiling water or even very hot water.

If you've ever seen the girls in a candy factory dipping chocolates, you may have noticed that the thick melted chocolate they were using was not even warm to the touch. And their candies come out with that beautiful even, dark, coating that everybody likes.

This special kind of dipping chocolate has more cocoa butter in it than the chocolate you use in making cake and in ordinary cooking. That's why it melts so easily at such a low temperature. All that fat in it also makes it scorch very easily. Then, also, when chocolate gets hot, the starch in it thickens. All those things added up make the white streaks on the candy

So have your melted chocolate just as cool as you possibly can without its going back to the solid state. And have your candies or your nuts, whatever you're dipping, also cool. Drop them in and roll them around. Then put them on wax paper to dry off and harden. And the result should be a chocolate coating that's rich, and thick, and even.

KADDERLY:

Ruth, I have a question about last week's broadcast. You remember we mentioned the nut leaflet, with directions for salting nuts.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, I remember. The mail room's been very busy ever since.

KADDERLY:

Well, how's the supply of that leaflet holding out?

VAN DEMAN:

I think there are still plenty. And everybody's been working extra hard to keep up to date with the orders.

KADDERLY:

But you don't mind if you have some more orders?

VAN DEMAN:

No, we'll work them in as soon as we can after Christmas.

KADDERLY:

Well, thank you, Ruth Van Deman, for your answers to last-minute Christmas questions. And Farm and Home friends, if any of you didn't happen to hear the offer last week of the leaflets on Nuts and Ways to Use Them, and would like to add it to your home economics library, just send a card to the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, here in Washington, D. C. And, Ruth, we'll be seeing you up here tomorrow, I hope.

VAN DEMAN:

Oh yes, I'll come, and shall I bring a Christmas present?

